

# Inner Voice

Issue  
Four

A Truly Rural Production



This issue: Deadlands, Talislanta and more....

## **Inner Voice**

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For submission guidelines please check out the Truly Rural website.

<http://www.trulyrural.com/>

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## **Monotone Introduction**

Well finally I managed to get the fourth issue put together and out on the net. With a little variation in the games that are covered this issue, which I'm happy for. So hopefully we keep this up and deviate to a few other games out on the market (or that used to be on the market as I'm an old fan of out of print games) and bring in a few more readers.

There were a couple of last minute changes that a couple of people might notice. Originally I listed an article series, written by yours truly, titled "Broken Transmissions" was going to start this issue. Well after reading through it a few times and thinking about it for a while I decided to drop it. It just didn't have the hook that I was hoping for. Maybe someday I will start it up but not right now. Instead I replaced it with a monster for the RPG Little Fears, one that I hope you will enjoy.

One thing that is lacking in this issue is artwork. We got absolutely no art submissions in this time around. So for the cover I dug out one of my old pen and inks from days gone by and used it. Hopefully it will be the last time I have to do that as I would rather showcase someone else's art rather than my own. I've got the old "I'm my own worst critic" syndrome in that department. So if you know anybody who may be interested I implore you to shoot him or her the link to the ezine and tell them about it.

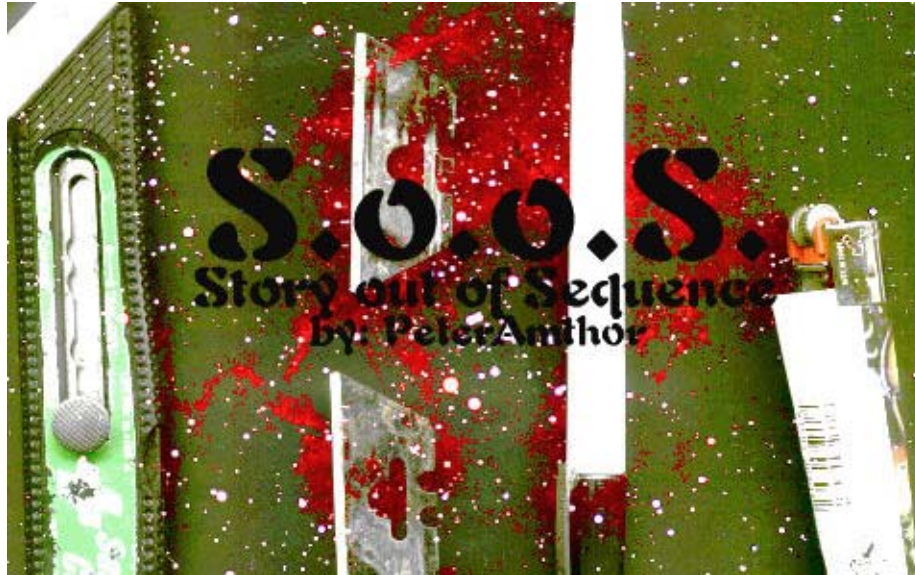
Another note is that this issue is actually out at a pretty decent time compared to the one year hiatus between issues two and three. I plan on keeping this up as long as the material keeps making it to my inbox. At this point there is no plan for a regular set deadline, I'll just put the next issue out when the page count gets up to around 25 to 30.

Also there has been two people who have emailed me asking why there aren't more gaming articles in the issues. A simple question for which I have a simple answer, because nobody has sent me any more in. I would love to have more gaming material in these pages, but I can't do it all myself.

Any thoughts, feedback, complaints or whatever please feel free to send them to me. I'll read them over and give you an answer. It would be really nice to know what people think about this electronic rag that I'm doing, right now I'm still shooting in the dark for the most part.

Well until next issue, stay sane,

PeterAmthor



**Story out of Sequence**  
**Part Four**  
**“Preparation”**  
**By Peter Amthor**

“So we’re just going to put his soul back into a body that’s been rotting in a box for a couple months? I thought, like, it would go into another body. Send that persons soul out and put my fathers in.” Tonya spoke while still staring at the doors, waiting for an explanation.

“Well...” Robert paused long enough to light up a Camel, “...it’s only going to be in that state momentarily. Once he is safely tucked away inside I start up another ritual that restores the body. Normally it would be impossible for it to work on a corpse, but with the soul inside it takes. In about a week you dad will be up, walking around, in his old body just like it used to be.” Taking a few paces up behind her he placed his hand on her shoulder. “How does that sound to you?”

“Better than I had imagined actually.” Tonya turned around with a grin of excitement upon her face. She reached up and takes the smoking cigarette from his lips and took a drag off of it. “Of course I should have realized for what I am paying that I am getting a true professional.”

“I am nothing if not professional.” He let out a sly smile and moved his hands to her hips, pulling her closer. “On top of that there is nothing that I wouldn’t do for you.”

“Well then lets get this started, shall we?”

“That bit of detail certainly got your enthusiasm up didn’t it?” Over dramatically he stepped away from Tonya and turned towards the doors. Turning his head just enough

to catch her face in his vision he placed his hands on the handle and turned it. With one swift motion he turned back towards the doors and pushed them open while walking in.

Her breath nearly escaped her at its site. On a rolling rack before her was the very casket she had picked out for the funeral, slightly dirty and smelled of earth. She took a few cautious steps forward and placed her fingertips along its side making sure it was solid and not imagined. Then running her hand over its top she stopped at a folded red cloth on the top just above where the head would be. “You’ve certainly outdone yourself Robert, I will give you that. But what’s in the cloth?”

“That contains something that will be most helpful in finding your dear departed father. You see contrary to popular belief the soul doesn’t leave the body upon death, but only upon burial. Until that time it is trapped inside and witness to the events that follow. Once the first few shovels of dirt land upon the casket the soul is pushed up and out of its former shell from there it will go wherever it is supposed to go.” Robert walked onto the side of opposite of Tonya looking down at the cloth. “Normally it is through a sample of dirt that is collected that we trace the soul through since that is what it passed through. This time, however, we have something very connected to you and his soul passed through it. We have the rose you laid upon the casket before it was lowered into the ground.”

“My last farewell to him. I was the only one who stayed to watch the actual burial. They took the other flowers off of the top but I asked them to leave one that I had brought. Something that I hoped he would take with him to the other side.”

“He may not have took it with him, but rest assured that he did touch it on the way out. Now you guide from the front and I will push it. Tell me before we get up onto the lines on the floor, we’ve got to be careful going over them.”

The wheels of the rack began to squeak slightly as Robert started pushing. Tonya grabbed the front handle with both hands and pulled as best she could while trying to watch over her shoulder directing them. With the weight being so high it felt as if there was an unavoidable topple whenever they hit any small crevice in the floor. Slowly they manage to get it up to the circle.

“Alright from here we are going to have be on either side and lift the rack up and move it forward over the paint. We need to take it slow or we will wind up having to start all over again, and that’s something I would rather not do.”

“No problem, I got it.”

“Get on the left, I’ll get on the right. Okay. You ready?”

“Yeah I got a good grip.” She looked down at the floor underneath her and placed her feet appropriately so as not to step in the wrong place. “I’m ready.”

“Good. On three, one, two, three lift!” They both strain and manage to lift the front wheels of the rack an inch off of the ground. “Now forward just six inches.” Franks voice strained. Each slowly inched forward just enough to bring the wheels over the line. “Down.”

Tonya looked back up at Frank with a little exertion sounding in her voice. “So tell me, why didn’t we move the casket in here before you put the lines down?”

“Can’t, the lines have to be down first then the host body added on top of them for it to work properly. A lot of magic like this is very specific about the order in which you do things. One thing wrong and it doesn’t work or worse, it does something unexpected.”

“Ah, okay. I should have realized there would be some sort of reason like that.”

For the next half hour they move the casket to the designs center a few inches at a time. Stopping to rest for a moment or two here and there before continuing on. A few final alignments at the end and Robert walks back to the side room.

“What next? We have something else to move?”

“Nope just a few things to carry with us to the other side. Come with me I’ve got something for you.” He works two locks open on a cabinet in the corner and waits until she has walked up behind him. Swinging the doors open slowly he here’s a small gasp from behind him. “We are going into an unfriendly area. It is best that we protect ourselves why we are there.”

Tonya steps closer looking at the cabinet’s contents with a slow studying gaze. Several weapons hang inside, knives, swords with ornate handles, a beat up looking fireman’s axe and a host of necklaces and assorted objects. On the inside of each door was a black leather backpack with several pockets; along the bottom on the inside the cabinet were various clear glass vials of colored liquids.

“So are we going to have to take all of this with us?”

“No. Only a few will do us any good on the other side, the ones made to deal with those who reside there. What do you know how to use?”

“Well I can use a knife decently I guess but never tried a sword. I’ve used an axe to chop and split wood but not for anything else.”

“Then the you will carry the axe. Put this necklace on as well, it will make it harder for you to be seen.” Robert throws the backpack over his shoulder and hooks sword to his belt. “Whatever you do don’t loose the axe, it belonged to my father.”

“The only way I’ll let go of it is if I’m dead.”

“Lets hope it doesn’t come to that.”

## **Iaijutsu Winter**

by J.A.H. Martinez  
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The little bird sat there up high, its feathers puffed out angrily against the razor sharp winter wind. He was too cold to notice the clear, black, endless night sky filled with bright pinpricks of stars that loomed above him. He did not notice the too-bright white moon that stood out starkly against the black void it rested in.

The little bird gave a shiver and felt precious warmth leave his body, stolen away by the sharp cold wind. For the little bird cold and death were one in the same, and they both rode the night's winter wind. Burrowing his little head into his faintly warm breast, the little bird did not notice the two figures walking towards each other.

One walked from the city, its shadow pulled long by the moon. Over snow covered concrete, broken glass, and railroad tracks it came. Steady and slow it approached. The little bird did not notice the long cape it wore, thrashing in the wind nor did he notice the lone figure's hair blowing about frantically. He did not hear its booted footsteps punching through the crusty snow, that unmistakable sound that seems loudest at night. The figure cut a direct path in the virgin unbroken snow.

The other walked from the old forest. It came from between the thick staggered rows of pine trees, whose boughs scrapped the snowy ground. No sharp scent of pine sap was carried on the wind. The cold wind had killed nearly every sense but touch, which it attacked with a thousand icy fingers. The little bird did not notice that the figure's stride weaved from pine tree to pine tree. Its path trotted along from cover to cover, as if hunting. He did not see that both figures wore long swords attached at their hips.

The night seemed to care little about the two figures. It seemed to hang forever as if daring the sun to rise and drive it away. On the wind rode that sharp cold scent, that reminds living creatures of the frailty of their life. It reminds them that their warmth keeps them alive. The wind knows where it's hidden and tries to drag it out.

The little bird did not notice the two figures becoming closer. One on the outskirts of the quiet city, the other on the edge of the quiet tree line. An empty field of white loomed between them. An unpainted canvas, it spilled before them motionless. High above the moon shone like a night time sun, its light different, but no less illuminating.

One figure did not break its arrow-like direction as it pounded its way out onto the field of snow. Its shadow stood taller out in the open, as if leading it towards something. The other figure hesitated along the tree line before it broke into the clearing. Its walk lost its dance-like steps, and it walked forward much like its opposite. Together they continued towards each other, looking as if they might meet in the center of the white field.

After many cold moments, the two were nearly at one another. Within a few more they stood, not one foot apart, face to face, opposite to opposite. Two stark figures standing in the center of nothing, only their tracks gave any hint to their purpose. Their shadows tossed against the ground like an old cloak. Their swords in their sheaths.

The little bird did not see them stare into one another's eyes. One's eyes were slitted against the wind and had to look up into the face of the other. He did not see tears in them brought about by the razor blades the wind carried. The figure's head was locked upwards staring up at its opposite, whose own gaze looked down. The little bird did not see the other figure's large yellow eyes, stare down unblinking at the challenge. They did not water, they did not waver. These eyes were not capable of showing any emotion. They only existed to hunt.

The wind attacked the two figures, ripping into them as if angry that they dared stand defiantly out in the open. The twin statues, while unmatching, stood perfectly still staring at one another. The little bird did not see the figure from the forest's gray fur ripple, water-like, as the wind beat at it. He did not notice its hide cloak snapping and biting in the wind. Nor did he notice the redness of the one from the city's face as if it had been burned deep by the cold wind. Instead he stamped his tiny feet and hunkered down for warmth, bracing his little body against the wind.

An eternity passed for the little bird. An eternity of cold and chilling wind. An eternity of the whispering of promised death. An eternity of life. Time itself seemed frozen, stopped by the winter winds. All appeared as a still photo, the city, the snowy open field, the two figures, the moon, the forest. The only sound was that of the wind scraping by the landscape.

Then comes the supreme unspoken moment. Both figures leap into blurred action. Two swords quickly drawn, both invisible and deadly like the wind. Both seeking warmth. Only one finding it and drinking deeply.

Both figures stand there. Again static and again silent. All traces of motion have vanished, as if they never had moved. Face to face, they still stare into one another's eyes. The razor sharp winter wind still blows. Then the impossible happens as one of the figures falls to the ground in a lifeless heap.

The little bird does not notice as the remaining figure sheaths its sword and walks back the way it came.



## **Mrs. Sinclair**

By: Steven M. Finger

Mrs. Sinclair told us the best stories. Even years later when we first became adults my brother Benny and I would still reference them to each other now and then and reminisce about her.

It was so much better than any of these so called "Hollywood Blockbusters" and Got-To-Have! video games the kids drive me nuts for today, can ever be. Many a day I thought. Oh, how I'd love to hear one of her wonderful stories again. She didn't talk down to us as children. She talked to us as a friend.

Mrs. Sinclair was an elderly Haitian woman who used to sit in the park on Saturday afternoons. She was always friendly and engaging toward us, especially me.

At first, I remember how we thought she was scary but she had a familiar and friendly face. Older people can seem so scary and unnatural in the eyes of a child and at times Mrs. Sinclair was no different.

One day, I just walked up to her and said "Hello" and we quickly became friendly. She always seemed to be surprised to see us. Sadly, the other kids in the park never talked to her.

She always said I was special. Ben would protest and she'd tell him "child, of course you are special too" and smile and somehow all would be forgiven. When I'd tease Benny about it, he'd say it was only because I was a girl.

When Benny got too old to pal around with his baby sister, I'd still go to the park alone for another story and another visit with Mrs. Sinclair while Benny hung out with his buddies.

Mrs. Sinclair would almost always be there, humming to herself and just passing the time on a bench in the shade. She was always in her old-fashioned clothes and big hat with flowers.

I'd always be the first one to say hello, just like that first time. I don't think she could see too well. It's so hard to recall now but perhaps she was partially blind or senile. No matter what the reason she always seemed surprised and happy to see me.

She had told us long tales of witches and zombies. She told us about vampires and demons, of magic and other worlds... and things that happened back in her country long ago.

These were not the nursery rhymes kids are commonly told, these went well beyond that. She'd tell us there was much more to life and ourselves then we realized, that there were things we cannot always touch or see but promised us they were there just the same.

She had answers for everything we'd ask. Benny thought he had her one time and questioned her about how the undead knew where to find the people they were after. She smiled and said, that the land of the dead was very much different then the world we understand. Time and space were meaningless there. It was as good an answer as any for us at that time.

One Saturday afternoon, old Mrs. Sinclair picked a flower from her hat and gave it to me. She said, I should hurry home it was going to rain. The sky was growing dark fast, so I said goodbye and ran off. She told me she'd see me soon enough and that next time, she'd tell me a marvelous ghost story. I was very excited and couldn't wait to hear it.

When I got home... there was an ambulance and a police car in front of the house. Some of the neighbors had gathered outside on the lawn. I ran past them all and went right into the house.

That day my Dad had died of a heart attack. At the end of that week we packed up and closed the house, moving out east to be near my Mom's family. In some ways, I focused all my anger and emotion on Mrs. Sinclair.

If she would have told me that ghost story I wouldn't have seen my Dad lying there in the kitchen. It was a child's logic, and as time passed so did the resentment. In a way, it made it real and I could let him go. Benny has his ashes now I didn't want any mishaps with the kids.

The house was eventually sold to my Uncle, one of Dad's brothers. I pressed the flower old Mrs. Sinclair had given me in the family bible. We never saw Mrs. Sinclair again. Surely she is gone by now. Benny still remembers her but not the same way I do.

After I married and had the twins, Joseph and Grace my Mother passed away. It was both a joyous time and a time of sorrow. It must have affected Benny because he settled down later that year after finally buckling down and getting a business degree in a local College.

We had stayed close and Benny and my husband Randy became really good friends. Everything was going well but time claimed my Uncle just three years after Mom. My Aunt was putting the house up on the market and going to Florida. They never had any children so she offered it to each of us but we just couldn't afford it. Besides, we had a life here in the east now.

Of course Benny and I flew out west for the funeral, after which my Aunt encouraged us to go through the basement and attic. A lot of Mom and Dads things were still there. It

felt odd being back in the old homestead, things were just so different after all these years.

I found the bible and the pressed flower Mrs. Sinclair had given to me. I began remembering all the stories and then her sweet smile and it brought me a moment of joy in an otherwise somber day.

My Aunt upon seeing my reaction to it asked me what it was. I told her it was a flower old Mrs. Sinclair had given me the day that Dad died. I had clung to it all during that time before finally pressing it in the family bible.

My Aunt told me I must be mistaken if it was the old Mrs. Sinclair who used to be our nanny, way back when my Mom and Dad both worked.

Benny said he never remembered Mom and Dad both working and either did I for that matter. I never even knew we had a nanny.

Oh, it wasn't for very long, you were only about four or so at the time my Aunt told Benny. My brother and I were Irish twins as they say, having been born less than a year apart from one another. Mom was always a housewife as far as we were concerned.

My Aunt continued, Your parents were unsure about taking her on at first due to her age but she was so wonderful with you kids and enthusiastic they just gave her the job.

She'd take you to the park and always made such a fuss over you two, especially you Regina. I can still picture her in that big old-fashioned hat telling some tall tale. It was only after she died in her sleep one night that your Mom then decided to stay at home with you two.

It can't be I said and Benny completely agreed with me for a change. My Aunt said she still remembers the funeral, they were the only whites there but everyone was kind enough to them. She must have been widely respected; it was the largest funeral procession they'd ever witnessed.

At the end of the ceremony everyone thanked them for coming and giving her the job. You kids gave her great joy in her final years. With their thick accents it was hard to understand some of her family and most of the ceremony but they sang a lovely spiritual of some kind at the end.

She looked through an old photo album and eventually pulled out a photo of her with us in the park. We were only infants in the black and white photograph. On the back in pencil it had her name and directions to an old black cemetery, about 20 miles away.

I got chills up and down my spine. Maybe my Aunt Ellen was the mistaken one, she was a bit of a drinker but she seemed so certain and had no reason to lie to us. I was left really confused and Benny seemed to just shake it off quickly enough.

That night, I dreamed of Mrs. Sinclair smiling and humming. I had all but forgotten the melody but it was clear in my mind now. Benny was still asleep so I asked my Aunt to borrow her car for a while.

Benny had made plans to see his old buddies before we were to head back east that evening, so I left him the rental car and drove out to the cemetery alone. I stopped in the cemetery office and got directions to the grave. My Aunt was right. I located it and read the dates on the headstone. I was only three years old when she died and oddly enough, we shared the same birthday.

I wiped a few tears from my eyes and opened the bible. I took out the flower and placed it on the grave and said thanks for the stories to Mrs. Sinclair, thanks for being my friend.

That night when I got back home the twins were up and so excited to see me, it was hard to put them down for the night. I found myself humming the Mrs. Sinclair tune and shortly after they were out for the night.

I think this Saturday we'll all go to the park and start a new tradition. I think I'll tell them... a ghost story.



## Mannequins

A new creature for **Little Fears**

By PeterAmthor

These animate objects brought to life have the ability to be a nightmare to any child. Children can often see them watching them in stores while their parents are blissfully unaware while shopping. This leads to the child's fear of going into large department stores, even when with their family nearby. They can also be seen walking the mall among the crowds, disguised as security officers, janitors or just regular everyday people, but again only the child seems to notice them for what they really are.

During the night they climb down from their displays and pull themselves out of backrooms to go in search of that which they thrive off of. Soul. These creatures are able to absorb a point of soul from a child simply by holding on to him for a minute or so. However a single mannequin may only do this once per child each night. Soul lost this way may never be recovered.

### **System Stats.**

Attacks: Fist: 2 (if a child is hit by rolling a six then they are knocked down).

The mannequins main attack strategy is to knock the child down with its fist or to knock them off balance. It will then attempt to grab the child who will have to make a successful feet quiz to escape, if the child is knocked down then they will have to roll an extra die and keep the lowest. Of course an attribute that would give you a bonus die to help the child is negated along with the extra for being knocked down. To break free once a mannequin grabs a child they must make successful quizzes under their muscle. When the child breaks free the GM rolls for the mannequin, on a roll of one it loses an arm in

the struggle. If the child is held by the grab for a minute the child must make a Spirit quizzes or lose a point of Soul permanently.

These constructs also tend to be a little on the fragile side. Whenever a mannequin is hit the GM will need to roll to see if something was knocked off. On a roll of one it loses a piece, decided by the chart below. If the child hit with a natural one then one piece is automatically knocked off and the GM doesn't need the roll.

- 1 Head
- 2 Right Arm
- 3 Left Arm
- 4 Right Leg
- 5 Left Leg
- 6 Separates at torso.

With pieces missing it is up to the GM to decide how effective they are. But once the head is gone the mannequin ceases to function. Also mannequins may be put back together simply by placing the limb back. This works with whatever limb is placed in the section. This can create some odd creations of four legged things that walk like spiders and four armed climbing creatures out of bad dreams. Who these creatures serve or who originally created them is unknown.

Any thoughts or comments can be sent to: [peteramthor@trulyrural.com](mailto:peteramthor@trulyrural.com).

Little Fears is owned wholly by Jason L. Blair

# High Plains Devil

## A Deadlands Beastie By Nathan J. Hill

### **Tombstone Epitaph**

An animal attack this week claimed the life of two brother gunslingers, Joe & Dennis Cleary. Sources say that the two gunslingers were headed to Deadwood for general mine work, when some large animal waylaid them near sundown four miles south of Deadwood. After some examination, the local marshal was unable to come to any sort of conclusion, except that 'something large and mean did it'.

Local authorities are leading further investigations, sending out warnings that a large mountain lion may be on the loose somewhere near the area. This attack is only the eighth attack in several weeks by a supposed mountain lion. Many farmers and ranchers in the area are getting nervous with the prospects of dealing with a mountain lion that could take down two experienced gunslingers with ease.

According to one local coot, 'Furbucket' Jethrow Wilcox, the cat is meaner than a Texas rattler caught in a twister. "I've seen many a' brave souls come through here town, lookin' to take on jus' 'bout anythin' that comes along. Then they meet the High Plains Devil, and they'sa usually turn an' run for their damned lives. I should know. I've seen it more than a 'undred times." He said when asked about the creature with undoubtedly some embellishment. "That thar cat is tallah than my ol' shack, somethin' near 9 feet. An' when it kills, it don't eats 'em. It merely cuts their belly open real nice and swift like. You don't even gots a chance to scream!"

Needless to say, if such a terrifying creature exists, it might cause more than just a little fear. The local ranchers have decided to offer a \$600 reward for its death. Any interested parties should feel free to contact rancher Jim Heflin, located 5 miles south of Deadwood, for any further information.

### **Marshal's Law**

#### *High Plains Devil*

The High Plains Devil came perhaps from some farmer's nightmare or perhaps from some forgotten Indian legend. Needless to say, when the nightmare became true, folks began to die.

Plenty of farmers are in a scurry to kill any sort of wild cat that comes along, be it mountain lion or bob cat. Unfortunately, things are not that easy with the High Plains

Devil. For starters, the Devil is 8 feet tall and stretches a whopping 22 feet from head to tail. The cat's maw can crush a good sized sheep in a flash. It resembles mostly its smaller cousins, the mountain lions, but with a viciousness and evil air about it that will make any good soul cringe.

The cat has the unnatural power to create shadows around it. When it moves, no matter what light is in the area, the cat is covered with shadows. In this manner, all guns are immediately reduced in effectiveness. Its hard to hit something you can't see.

The High Plains Devil is stubborn and cunning. Luckily for most night fearing folk, it only comes out when the sun has slipped beneath the horizon. Also, it seems to strike randomly, ranging through South Dakota near Deadwood and all the way down toward Dodge City. No one is quite sure how it can travel so fast, but it does. Some have reported that the Devil has tracked them for miles unrelentingly.

What is worse about the Devil, is that it never eats its kills. It seems to have no need for consumption in that matter, more or less delighting only from the fear it causes in its victims. Its normal method of killing is simply to slash open the belly, and it does with an amazing skill. While its paws may be as large as a human head, they move with supernatural precision.

When it chooses a victim, the Devil simply studies them for a short while, gauging their strongest members and calculating an ambush opportunity. It prefers to hunt in tall grasses or rocky regions, slipping through shadows around the group. In fact, many times a smart posse will never release that the Devil has circled them more than twenty times, leading them to believe instead that there is more than one attacker around them. In this way, the Devil always catches its opponent's off guard.

### **High Plains Devil**

Corporeal: D: 2d6, N: 4d12+2, S: 4d12, Q: 5d12+4, V: 2d10

Fightin': Brawlin' 5d12+2, Sneak: 5d12+2

Mental: C: 3d12, K:2d4, M: 4d8, Sm: 2d4, Sp: 2d4

Trackin': 5d12

Size: 9

Terror: 9

#### **Special Abilities:**

**Shadows:** The Devil is always encloaked in a aura of shadows when hunting. This gives it an automatic +4 on sneak rolls when the aura is on. Also, any ranged attacks (guns, arrows, etc.) are at a -4 as well. Remember, the aura is only on when the Devil is hunting. A magical light source, if 10 feet away from the Devil, could also dispel the shadows.

**Slash Attack:** The Devil is known for its accurate slash attacks, ripping the victim's belly open just enough to ensure that death will follow in mere seconds. The attack acts as a



called shot at a -2 penalty. If the attack is successful and a character witnesses the event, a guts check must be rolled at an additional -4 penalty.

Traveling: The Devil travels at night through its own dark magic. Once it catches scent of a potential victim, it can easily catch up to them by passing through shadows at twice the normal speed. In this manner, the cat could actually make it from Deadwood to Dodge then to Deadwood again in one night, although this sort of traveling does tire the beast out. Normally, the cat chooses a victim heading from one place to the other and spends time stalking them, feeding off their fear before attacking.

Deadlands is owned by Great White Games ([www.greatwhitegames.com](http://www.greatwhitegames.com))

## Thrall Funeralary Rites

*A short collaborative bit from Max Hattuer and Peter Amthor, giving a quick overview of Thrall Funeralary Procedures.*

When a Thrall dies great pains taken to get the body back to the village of his origin. If possible right back to their immediate family.

There, the clan elders receive the body and notify an Ariane that stays in Tor so they may perform the Reading of the Tattoos when it comes time.

The Reading of the Tattoos is a special ritual wherein the Thralls Clan, friends and the Ariane are the only ones privy. A Thrall Tattoo Artist goes over his fallen comrades body, detailing the life as etched in the tattoos for those present to hear. The Ariane records all of this in his Tamar, for future generations.

After the Reading of the Tattoos is finished, a party is held in the fallen's honour. Here the pivotal points of his story are told again to a much larger crowd than before. There is a feast in their honor the atmosphere of this event is not much in the way of mourning. It is much more a celebration of the Thralls life and accomplishments. Afterwards the body is removed from the sight of outsiders.

The body is then taken to a secret location, and given to the Thrall Taler's, the historians of the Thrall people. The Thrall Taler's take the skin of the fallen Thrall to meet one of two fates. Normally, the Thralls skin is turned into a scroll or wall hanging. Those whose actions are truly of great note are made into a robe, to be worn when the Thralls tale is told so the various tattoos detailing his great achievements may be pointed out. This is all done to help preserve the history and culture of the Thrall race.

Max Hattuer has more material appearing soon in the upcoming Talislanta book Codex Magicus from Morrigan Press.

Talislanta is currently produced by Morrigan Press ([www.morriganrpg.com](http://www.morriganrpg.com))

## **The Librarian**

### **Part I**

by J.A.H Martinez  
Library concept by Derek A. Stoelting

I stop by my apartment and change out of my bloody clothes before I go to the Library. She gets all kinds of pissed off when I get blood on the books, it makes the pages stick together. I toss the book bag on the card table next to the week old, take-out Mexican and a half empty ammo box. The backpack is in the same shape my suit's in, but nothing can get through it's fabric and harm it's contents. It's magik. Handy that. I need a suit like that. I throw my double underarm holsters on the couch and hope the pistols don't go off as they clank together clumsily.

I dump the soiled clothes in the garbage, I don't bother trying to get them cleaned. Vampyre blood doesn't come out and just makes the Jewish dry cleaner ask questions. I don't like questions, questions are bad in my line of work. Then again everything is my line of work is bad. Being a Librarian is a tough job.

A shower, clean suit, black shirt, Ray-bans, wing tips, my back up watch with the cracked face, and I'm ready to go 20 minutes later. I snag the double holster and strap it on, then I pull out my .38s, reload them, and give them a spin. 12 shiny hollow points tell me their loaded and ready for action. I always figure if I need more then 12 bullets I'm screwed anyway. For big jobs I carry a double barreled, pistol grip, sawed-off shot gun in my trunk. I've only needed it once, and when I shot it, it broke my wrist. Fun time.

Grabbing the backpack I head down and out to my new car. Primer black older Chevy Impala with rust details, no license plate. It's missing one wiper blade and one headlight. I've had it for a week. That's almost a record for me. I love these big old cars with the 400 pound doors. They just sound good when you slam them, even if a bit of rust hits the street. As I crank over the v8, the tape deck starts blaring the Beastie Boys, "Sabotage" out of blown speakers, *"I'm Buddy Rich when I fly off the handle."* Bobbing my head I skip first, right into second and peel out. Might as well enjoy it while I've got a clutch left in it. A few blown stop signs later and I'm headed to the Library.

I blow by a Happy Burger doing about 90 mph. I haven't had anything in my stomach for nearly two days but diner coffee and a handful of Dexedrine. I slam on the brakes and do a U-turn in the middle of the street. I scrape the Impala's undercarriage as I pull into Happy Burger's parking lot. The giant Happy Burger clown, stares at me with dead eyes from atop the building. I gun it through the mini-van crowded parking lot, and whip around into the drive through lane. There's one car in it at the last window and their about to get their food. I slam down the gas pedal and rear end them going about 45. Their back end actual comes off the ground as they're thrown forward. Now that I'm in front of the window I grab the greasy sack of whatever they ordered and cut around them heading out of the parking lot. When I'm back on the road, I remember I forgot to get something to drink.

\* \* \* \* \*

There's only a few of us "normals" that know what road the Library's on. It's on three actually. But finding them isn't easy unless you know what your looking for. See the Library's not in any phone book or on any normal map. It's not even in any city. It's in The City. The first one. Numero Uno. Metropolis. Don't ask it's much safer that way. I've lived there most my life. Childhood was a blast.

I could enter Metropolis by one the Houses built by the Archons' servants but I prefer to keep a low profile using less popular entrances. Keeping a low profile in Metropolis often means keeping your soul. One of my "real world" sources, a local heroin dealer, has tipped me off to alley where there was a triple homicide recently. Least that's what the cops called it. I know better. It was a sacrifice. I'm better off not mentioning the receivers name. Angels and Devils all have ears. Call it chi, energy, psychic residue, magik, or whatever, that alley is my entrance ramp into Metropolis today. It's a bitch finding a way into the City. Finding your way out is even worse. I ask myself for the hundredth time why I still work there.

A few felonies later I'm parked in front of the alley. My car's engine is knocking in time with my heart beats. The hairs on the back of my neck are standing up and my guys are trying to re-ascend. Yup, this alley will do just fine. I don't understand the mojo, I just know it works. I put the car in first, let out the clutch and creep into what might just be Heaven and Hell.

\* \* \* \* \*

I'm going about 25 mph down the cracked and pitted asphalt road. The sky has taken on an oppressive reddish cast, filled by smoky purple clouds. I can see the Citadels in the distance, penetrating into the sky. You can never forget whose in charge around here in Metropolis. They won't let you. Slums and rickety buildings surround me, their shadows deep and needy. I pass a tall hooded figure pushing an antique baby carriage along the uneven side walk. I don't stare, but I do check my review mirror to make sure it hasn't turned around to follow me. Iron fencing and twisted gas light poles lead me along this long and narrow street. Metropolis isn't like any city in the world. It's all of them.

Most of the streets are deserted here, every now and then I see a distorted face in the window or see movement out of the corner of my eye, but so far nothings bothered with me yet. Most folks expect to be eaten by Daemons their first five minutes here. That only happens every now and then. Metropolis is so damn big, that many of us humans go unnoticed. You just try to blend in and not draw attention to yourself. It's easier said then done. Making a left few turns and my tires finally find one of the roads that leads to the Library.

It's not as wide as a Citadel, but the Library is just as tall. You can't see it's top. *Hell I don't even know if it has a top.* I grew up on the 134th floor, right next to a shelf of old mildewed pulp detective magazines. I wasn't born there, but I've lived there since I was about nine. I've got this wall in my head that doesn't let me remember anything before that. I know how to read and write, junk like that, but any memories of my family (if I had any) or my childhood before the Library is locked behind that wall. If I said I missed it I'd be lying. Hard to miss something you don't know about. Besides growing up in Metropolis doesn't leave much time for thoughts of Mom, Dad, and a white picket fence.

Rounding a corner I find myself pulling up to the Library. It's not a pretty building. Cool, moist black stones make up it's outer walls. Grim, stained windows are placed on it at chaotic intervals like open sores. You can't see in them, but that's better for you. The lower levels of the Library are filled with a rolling green poisonous gas, and God knows what else. I've heard rumors of all sorts of creatures cavorting down there. I can imagine the tall, pin-thin creatures flailing about with their mouths screaming soundlessly in the deadly green mist. That's one rumor I won't bother to be checking out.

I park the Impala and grab the book bag. The blood on it is almost dried, so I don't worry about attracting too much attention. Still I pull a .38, just in case. *Buddy Rich indeed.* Some rust hits the street as I slam the car door and after a quick visual on the surroundings I make my way towards the Driver and his "air ship".

The Driver is the only way in the Library. Over three tons of gleaming steel, long shards of glass, and the blackest pig iron make up this monster. He stands well over ten feet tall at the shoulder, his clawed hands as big as leaf rakes. His tiny human sized head is speared on the splinters of glass, steel, and iron that make up his shoulders. Blood still drips down his chest. The face looks as if it belongs to some "pug" boxer, all lumpy and pink. Needless to say not many people mess with the Driver.

I climb in the Driver's air ship. It's like a mini zeppelin, with all sorts of lamps and stuff hanging off it. His ship has all sorts of gadgets and levers on it's control panel. I've never really bother to watch him pilot it. I just know it works. It raises slowly, steered by the Driver and I wait as he circles the Library, floating upwards lazily. I always hate this part of the trip the most, so I slump down and grab 20 winks. I make a bet with myself that I won't be able to fall asleep.

I don't know how long we've been stopped, but I manage to peel my eyes open. I feel like Hell. I pop a few more Dexedrine and head down the gangway that leads from the docking platform to the Library entrance, my book bag over my shoulder. A few doors later, I'm in the Library. The comfortable dusty scent hits me like a ton of bricks. It's the only thing I associate "home" with. Thousands and thousands of books are shelved perfectly on rich dark wood shelves. Their spines perfectly aligned and arranged by subject. The shelves wrap around the circular room with large sliding ladders attached to them. In the corners of the room are black iron spiral staircases leading both up and

down. My feet find the thick rich red carpet on the floor welcoming after the last few days I've had. It's so quiet and empty you could hear a pin drop.

I make my way over to the return counter. I toss the book bag on top of it's wooden counter top and wait for Nyx to hobble over. I'd tell you what Nyx is, but I have no idea. He looks like the offspring of an ugly Chihuahua that got humped by a deranged Muppet. I'm guessing he's some sorta of Imp, but I've never bothered to ask him. My good manners and all. I watch as his office door swings opens and he makes his way over to the counter. I try not and stare as he hobbles over with that strange pigeon towed limp. . *An Imp with a limp*. Somewhere in my head Dr. Suess is beating off and cackling like mad. I chuckle to myself when I see he's wearing flip flops.

"Gil, quit yer effin starin would ya? Ets not nice to lauf an eyeball a man's short-commins", I let him chastise me while he scampers up on his stool that he stands on for counter work. I've never been able to place his accent. It's got a bit of everything in it, kinda like the City. One of his bug eyes stares at me while the other looks down at my book bag. Neat trick.

"Quit your bitchin, I was admiring your pretty shoes. It's a good look for you, especially considering you've got about five toes between your two feet." I unzip the book bag and let it's contents tumble out onto the counter between us. Nyx winces as the books land awkwardly. "I got both of them back...more or less intact." Nyx scoops up the books and stacks them on a return cart.

"Easy ur hard? Dey been gone ah long thime" I nod my head. These books have been overdue longer then I've been alive.

"Hard, but I guess you could say that he paid his fine. He's a pile of ash right now."

"Hmmp. Ah'll be gettin yer packet den." I watch as Nyx climbs down the stool and gimps back to the safe he's got in his office. This is how it normally works. Anyone that can find the Library can check out anything from it. I mean anything, nearly a copy of every single book in Creation is housed here. Everything from issues of Cheri to ancient texts written on human skin. Needless to say we have some interesting patrons coming and going. The Head Librarian helps folks find what they need and people like Nyx handle check outs and returns. Folks like me, were Librarians too, but we go out and collect those overdue books. Needless to say lots of folks don't like it when we show up wanting our books back. That's when my winning personality come out.

"Here's yer notes den. Dey old gurl luft dis fer ya too." He tosses two envelopes on the counter. One's loaded with well used greenbacks. The other is slim and sealed and it's got my name written on it in the Head Librarian's perfect script. *Gilbert*. I tuck my payment in my inner breast pocket. I tear off the end of the other one and find an overdue slip in it. Pulling it out I mutter when I recognize that name.

**The Nottingtree Collection**  
Jefferson Nottingtree, photographs  
Ari Rubenstien, foreword/editor  
**Special**  
*checked out to a Mr. Tungsten*

“Yer lookin all twee there, Gilly boy. You know tha person?”

“No,” I lie. “and don’t call me Gilly Boy, cripple foot.” Thing is, I do know the “person”. Tungsten is a sorcerer who has a hard on for me. Well that’s not the whole story but there is a hard on involved in it. Two in fact. Long story short, we both bagged this Goth groupie named Vanessa Duran. “V” had a great body back then and I did a hit and run on her. Thing was she was his protegee then. I took what she was offering, he took it personal. It was a few years ago but it had been a hell of a night, sometimes I still “think” about it in the shower. Word on the street is that he’s been looking for me and now all of a sudden he’s got an overdue book. I hate it when life gets predictable.

Tungsten owns a night club called Boku Bucks over in the real world. I’d bet my last dollar him and his groupies are going to be waiting for me at the club. I didn’t even wear my dancing shoes.

\* \* \* \* \*

I spot them as I’m walking out to my car. There’s three of them, all dressed in dark red suits with white ties. Tacky. Only black folks can dress like that and look good. These three are cracker white and have matching hair styles. Just as I convince myself their here to enter the Library and not for me, I see two of them reach into their suit jackets to pull out pistols. *Guess Tungsten won’t be waiting for me to come to him.* I hate it when I’m wrong.

I fast draw both my .38’s and shoot the one not reaching for a gun in chest. Trust me, it’s usually a good idea. If he doesn’t need a gun then he must be a badass. I smile as the bullets slam home, making his arms flail around like he’s a spastic puppet. That’s when his buddies open up with their guns. I hit the dirt, trying to throw myself behind my car. Doesn’t feel like I got shot, but I landed on my car keys and that hurts like a bitch.

I point both pistols under my car and shoot at their feet. My aim sucks when I’m laying down. I blow off half on one’s foot, and he goes down screaming. Damn those shoes look expensive. The other starts running towards me, still shooting at the car. Thank God for big old cars. I just hope he doesn’t blow a tire, I hate driving around with those little spares.

I quickly take off my back pack and put it on over my chest. Nothing will get through this thing. Since he’ll be right on top of me any second, I move towards the front of the car and come up shooting. I blow my own windshield out with a stray shot but the rest catch him in the chest. An extra bullet in the dome makes sure, he’ll stay down. I

walk over to the guy with half a foot. He's trying to crawl towards his pistol when I shoot him in the back of the head. Damn. I should have questioned him before shooting him. I get ahead of myself sometimes. I turn back around to make sure nobody is twitching and that's when I notice the first guy I shot isn't laying in the street anymore.

I whirl around looking for him, just as he charges his shoulder into my spine making me drop my guns. I pretend I didn't hear anything crack, as his momentum drives me into my car. The car wins and I get the wind knocked out of me. I try to swing my fist backwards into his crotch. *I hope this thing has testies.* I'm lucky as my hand smashes into something soft and vulnerable making him let go and stagger backwards. I turn around and see that his eyes are a whitish opaque and there's smoke rising off his red suit. Most likely some minor Daemon. Nice to know even Daemons have a pair, some a couple. I need to end this quickly before he freaks out and kills me.

I grab him by his over priced hair cut and yank his head backwards exposing his throat. I've had a pretty rough week. I hate it when people try and kill me. A couple of throat punches later, I'm feeling a little better. I've mashed his Adam's apple or whatever passes for it pretty good and he seems to be choking on something. That's the thing with Daemon's. You've got to get fast and dirty right from the get go. If they warm up you'll find yourself minus a soul.

Grabbing his collar, I slam him up against the car and open the drivers side door. I shove him down to his knees, with his head between the door and the frame. I grab the door with two hands and slam it a handful of times. Each time sounds like a pumpkin being smashed on the concrete. *I'm like Buddy Rich when I fly off the handle.* I stop of let what's left of his body hit the ground. Damn, I hate sitting in a wet seat.

I pop a few more pills and loot the bodies. I'm hoping for a business card, some sort of a clue, or Lauren Ambrose's panties. Nada. All I find are 400 bucks, their weapons, and a pair of killer shades. I keep the money and the sunglasses. Sitting on the hood of my car, I chew on a few more Dexes and count the number of bullets I have left. Not enough. Damn this is going to be a long night.

Sighing, I climb off my car and fall into in the driver's seat. Soon I'm headed out of Metropolis. Next stop, Club Boku Bucks. I've got an overdue Library book to return and a Sorcerer to kill.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Next Inner Voice, Part II**



### Links of note.

This section will contain links back to the personal or favorite sites that contributors to Inner Voice suggest. Want a link to your site to appear in an issue of Inner Voice? Well then submit some material and include a note letting us know about the link you want added it. It's that easy.



[www.maxhattuer.com](http://www.maxhattuer.com)

PsychoThriller: a collection of articles for various RPGs, most notably for Sla Industries, Kult and a growing collection of Talislanta material.

## THE VILLAGE

<http://www.shinies.net/village/html/>

The Village: a gaming site ran by Derek Stoelting aka Oaxaca.

## Mystic Ages Online

<http://www.mysticages.com/>

Mystic Ages online: The home site of Nathan J. Hill



<http://www.nepharite.com/>

Dark fiction, music and art from Steven M. Finger

## TRULY RURAL PRODUCTIONS

<http://www.trulyrural.com/>

Home of this ezine and homepage of PeterAmthor.

## **Notes at the End.**

Well here we are at the end of yet another issue of Inner Voice. Four down and a hell of a lot more to go.

Coming up next issue (yeah I actually have an idea of what to expect next issue, go figure how the hell that happened):

The Librarian Part Two by J. A. H. Martinez

The Library by Derek Stoelting, the inspiration for J. A. H. Martinez's fiction series.

Story out of Sequence part five by Peter Amthor

...and whatever else people send in.

Remember to tell other folks about this ezine and send them this way. Let's get some readers in here. The more the merrier, and hopefully, the more that send in material.